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PRESS RELEASE

U.S. AND EC UNITE TO SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN BANGLADESH

DHAKA, 26 OCTOBER -- The United States Government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the European Commission (EC) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) today to continue joint activities in the natural resources and protected area management sector. At a signing ceremony at the European Commission office in Dhaka, Ambassador Stefan Frowein, Head of Delegation of the EC to Bangladesh and Denise Rollins, Mission Director of USAID Bangladesh, signed the MOU to facilitate work on collaborative natural resource and protected area management programs in Bangladesh, particularly in the Sundarbans, in line with the Government of Bangladesh's policy and programs.

USAID and the EC will work together to implement and monitor progress of the Sundarbans Environmental and Livelihood Security project, (SEALS), with € 7.5 million Euro from the EC, and the Integrated Protected Area Co-management project (IPAC), with a USAID project grant of \$15.5 million. These five-year projects include the creation of various alternate income generation opportunities for people living in and around the Sundarbans and infrastructure rehabilitation in the Cyclone Sidr-affected areas. Other project activities include promoting conservation of the Sundarbans Reserve Forest, including the Sundarbans East, Sundarbans South, and Sundarbans West Wildlife Sanctuaries, and helping people living in these areas adapt to the impact of global climate change.

The U.S. Government has a long commitment to helping Bangladesh recover from disasters, escape from the unending cycle of poverty, and to strengthen its democracy. Through USAID, the U.S. Government's assistance to Bangladesh includes support for a return to democracy through free, fair and credible elections and more transparent and accountable governance. U.S. assistance to Bangladesh also helps foster a better educated, healthier and more productive population; provides increased economic opportunities through equitable economic growth (including energy, private sector competitiveness and conservation), and enhances food security and improved disaster preparation and mitigation.

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Note: A Bangla translation of this press release is also available at the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section, Tel: 8837150-4, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: DhakaPA@state.gov; Website: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>